CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 17 JUNE 1993 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MEXICO ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING A COPY OF A LETTER ON NUCLEAR TESTING SENT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON 14 JUNE 1993 BY THE MEMBERS OF THE PUGWASH COUNCIL ATTENDING THE 43RD PUGWASH CONFERENCE IN HASSELUDDEN, SWEDEN

In view of its indisputable interest for the members of the Conference on Disarmament, I would be grateful if you would arrange for the attached letter, published on 14 June this year during the 43rd Pugwash Conference, held in Hasseludden, Sweden, to be distributed as an official document.

(Signed): Miguel Marín Bosch
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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43rd Pugwash Conference, Hasseludden, Sweden
14 June 1993

PUGWASH LETTER TO PRESIDENT CLINTON ON NUCLEAR TESTING

President Bill Clinton
The White House

Dear President Clinton:

We are writing, as all of the members of the Pugwash Council attending this year's Pugwash Conference, to urge you to extend the current U.S. moratorium on nuclear explosive tests and to reject the arguments for additional testing before conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

We applaud your commitment to achievement of a CTBT and the embodiment of that goal in the Hatfield-Exon-Mitchell Amendment to the FY1993 Energy and Water Development Appropriation Act. We believe that a resumption of U.S. testing would delay -- and might well completely undermine -- the attainment of this critical objective. Both the delay in progress toward a CTBT and the perverse signals sent by the testing itself, moreover, would surely impair, perhaps fatally, the prospects for a positive outcome of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Extension Conference scheduled for 1995. The resulting damage to the most vital security interests of the U.S. and the world cannot possibly be compensated by the minuscule benefits ascribed to a resumption of testing by its proponents.

Let us be more specific. A resumption of U.S. testing, no matter how brief its duration or how narrow its stated purposes, would lead to:

(i) a resumption of Russian testing, a strengthening of the position of hardliners in Russia, and the creation of a further impediment to favorable resolution of the precarious nuclear-weapons status of Ukraine;

(ii) a resumption of French testing and a strengthening of the position of those in France who would like to block attainment of a CTBT altogether; and

(iii) assured continuation of Chinese testing, quite possibly extending beyond 1996.

These outcomes would weaken support for and complicate the negotiation of a CTBT; would squander any leadership and influence the United States and the other declared nuclear-weapon states might otherwise hope to exert in the NPT Extension Conference; and would strengthen pro-bomb factions in nuclear-threshold states, at best reducing the chance of engaging these states in the NPT and CTBT regimes and at worst propelling them toward nuclear tests of their own.

The "benefits" being offered in exchange for these appalling consequences are said to be such improvements in the reliability, safety, and performance of U.S. and U.K. warheads as might be accomplished with the addition of 15 (or fewer) further tests beyond the thousand such explosions that these two countries have already conducted. But what reliability problems, in a U.S. nuclear arsenal numbering several thousands of warheads of well tested types, could imperil the credibility of the deterrent function this arsenal is said to serve (or, if they existed, could be resolved by just a handful of tests)? How much additional safety could a few more tests buy, after nearly fifty years of prior learning about how to make these devices safe? And if, as some have suggested, the perfection of a "new" warhead is on the testing agenda, what need for such a thing can the United States or the United Kingdom plausibly assert in the post-Cold-War world, and what are likely to be the consequences, for proliferation incentives, of asserting it?

We find it difficult to believe, Mr. President, that hidden in the classified details are rationales to persuade an objective analyst that these outwardly meager benefits of a few tests are really large enough to offset the huge costs and risks that resuming testing would entail. It seems more probable that the proponents of such a resumption are hoping for just what you and we would wish to prevent -- namely, that a few more tests will lead to a great many more, by pushing a CTBT once more out of reach. Please do not allow that to happen.

Respectfully,

Professor Joseph Rotblat (United Kingdom), President of Pugwash
Professor Francesco Calogero (Italy), Secretary-General of Pugwash
Professor John P. Holdren (USA), Chairman of the Pugwash Executive Committee
Professor Maciej Nalecz (Poland), Chairman of the Pugwash Council
Professor Ogunlade Davidson (Sierra Leone), Member of the Executive Committee
Dr. Virginia Gamba (Argentina), Member of the Executive Committee
Academician Vitalii I. Goldanskii (Russia), Member of the Executive Committee
Dr. Venance Journé (France), Member of the Executive Committee
Dr. Martin M. Kaplan (Switzerland), Member of the Executive Committee
Professor Bhalchandra M. Udgaonkar (India), Member of the Executive Committee
Professor Gothom Arya (Thailand), Member of the Council
Professor Gabriel Baramki (West Bank), Member of the Council
Professor Anna Maria Cetto (Mexico), Member of the Council
Professor Ubiratan D'Ambrosio (Brazil), Member of the Council
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General Emmanuel Erskine (Ghana), Member of the Council
Professor Esmat Ezz (Egypt), Member of the Council
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Professor Martin M. Kaplan (Switzerland), Member of the Council
Professor Michiji Konuma (Japan), Member of the Council
Mr. Sverre Lodgaard (Norway), Member of the Council
Professor Amnon Pazy (Israel), Member of the Council
Professor Sebastian Pease (UK), Member of the Council

cc: Vice President Gore
Secretary of State Christopher
Secretary of Defense Aspin
Secretary of Energy O'Leary
National Security Advisor Lake
Presidential Science Advisor Gibbons
Senator Exon
Senator Hatfield
Senator Mitchell
Senator Nunn